

SENATOR SCHMIT: I want to say again, I'm offering this amendment. It is an amendment to save human lives and an amendment to save taxpayer dollars. You can't get a much better bargain than that. If it doesn't work, a year from now you've only lost \$33,000. If it does work at all by returning five additional persons to probation you save the entire cost of this amendment. I would urge the adoption of the amendment.

SPEAKER LUEDTKE: Chair recognizes Senator Bereuter.

SENATOR BEREUTER: Mr. President, members of the Legislature. I rise again in behalf of the Appropriations Committee to present our rationale for the decision on this point. We did receive the recommendation of the Executive Branch concerning more positions for probation officers, more probation officer positions. Reluctantly, we did not approve it this year as we have in the past. One of our concerns has been that when we take on new probation officers we, in effect, are generally picking up county probation officers. The people that work in the county probation system seem to bring their caseload with them and so we've really made no real progress in reducing the caseload of probation officers. But the primary reason that we did not fund it is that we decided it would be more appropriate for us to give a priority to increasing the salary of the existing probation officers. We found that our probation officers, the people really on the line, rank number 35 in the nation in terms of their reimbursement or their salary, 35th place. Even the chief probation officers rank 40th out of the 50 states. So there definitely is a salary problem, and there is a very high turnover rate. It is the highest in the probation officers that many times are offering us the very best of service. So the opinion of the Appropriations Committee at this point was to give more emphasis to salary increases than to add any new positions. Certainly I do not quarrel in the slightest, nor does the Appropriations Committee quarrel with the motives of Senator Schmit or his objectives in offering this. We simply point out to the members of the Legislature our rationale for making the decision that we made. Finally, I would raise question, based upon why, if you were to add two probation officers, it would be necessary to add two clerical positions. At the present time we've been told that the current ratio between officers and clerical is two to one. With a two to one ratio around the state it is hard for us to understand, even if you were to go with two additional probation officers, why they must be accompanied by two additional clerical positions. These are the reasons that the Appropriations Committee decided not to fund additional probation officers this year, but instead to provide \$65,000 of additional funds to be used for upgrading the salary of those officers that are doing a good job, to try to encourage them to stay with us and continue the good efforts that they are making. Therefore, in behalf of the Appropriations Committee I would have to speak against the Schmit amendment, even though we have no questions about his motives or objectives.

SPEAKER LUEDTKE: Senator Clark.

SENATOR CLARK: I ask for the question.